WHITEWASH

Australia's Bicentenary
Another history

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Use of the words Aborigine, Aboriginal: these are the words used at present to denote, in general, all the people who settled Australia before 1788. We acknowledge that the Aborigines in different regions have different names for themselves, ie; Koori, Murri, Nyunga....

Throughout this booklet we use the term - the state. In the simplest sense this means all the government structures - bureaucracies, parliaments, police, laws and courts, schools etc - that are used to control us. In Australia that means the Federal and State governments, local councils and semi-government authorities.

Increasingly the state is coming to dominate (through government funding, laws and regulations 'for our own good') more and more aspects of our lives. Trade union bureaucrats, social workers, community artists, legal aid lawyers, etc are becoming part of the state control structures.

The state rules society in the interests of the ruling class - all the bosses, landlords, big corporations, businessmen - who exploit us, as well as having its own interests - for more powers, bigger budgets, etc.

In the broadest sense, the state is the set of ideas and beliefs that we need to be told what to do and how to live; that authority and heirarchy are essential - A 'state of mind'.

If you find mistakes in this publication, please remember that they are there for a purpose. We publish something for everyone, and some people are always looking for mistakes.

WHY CELEBRATE 88?

The 1988 Bicentennial are inevitably revolving around a 'colonial era', peopled by brave noble 'men' who opened up, and then conquered, a vast 'empty' country. The media is constantly bombarding us with imformation about virtous, hardworking, ingenious, white Australians, who now, incidently, work in mythical harmony with later non saxon immigrants. The theme being 'Living Together' and 'Let's Make it Great'.

During 1987 alternative views began to filter through, John Pilger produced a damning review of Australian history with his documentary 'The Secret Country'. At last many of us learnt the truth behind West Australia's successful wool production when the film 'How the West was Lost' was shown in the eastern states. Most embarrassingly for the state, on the eve of the Bicentennial, was the long needed commission into Aboriginal deaths in Custody. The deaths are nothing new but the protests are getting louder.

We are concerned about the nature of the Bicentennial, the history it ignores, and the social problems it fails to confront.

This pamphlet is an attempt to unwrap these neglected parts of Australia's history. This includes attempted genocide, apartheid, and the general racial biotry that still exists.

We will recount features in Australian workers struggle that are invariably ignored in generalist histories. Most specifically the Internationalist and other non trade unionist movements that were invariably repressed by the state. This is a direct antithesis to the 'workers success story' projected by todays mainstream unions.

Far from celebrating, we should be bracing ourselves against future 'state repression'. Already what small freedoms we have gained are being taken. We are submitting to a revised ID system (the new tax number), cuts in our social services (medicare, under 18 dole,

childcare funding etc). The rich stuff up the economy by over valuing the stock market until it collapses, and then force the workers to take the consequences by forcing the government to refuse a national wage rise. As it is now, most people have no holes left to tighten the belt with.

The final section of this pamphlet deals with the importance of 'nationalism' to a capitalist society, it's consequences, and concurrently we look at the meaning and importance of an international conciousness. We do this here because the bicentennary celebrations are a nationalist celebration. 'Celebration of a Nation', an attempt to force this ideology onto everyone living on this continent. Nationalism has nothing to offer the workers of the world.

On January 26th 1788 eight sailing ships entered a bay on the east coast of Australia, landed and claimed the entire continent for the British Empire.

What will be celebrated in 1988? It is not the settlement of the continent. It is clear from archaeological evidence that Australian Aborigines had lived here for at least 40-50,000 years, and some recent research suggests that a branch of human life may have even evolved on this continent. It is not the 'discovery' of the continent - some of the ancestors of the Aborigines seem to have come to Australia from the north. Also, Melanesian people from the island of New Guinea and elsewhere in the pacific, and traders from the Indonesian islands had long visited the north of the country. It was not even the first european 'discovery' of the continent - Portuguese, Dutch, and British traders and explorers had all been here before. Nor is it 200 years since the founding of a nation state. Australia became a nation on January the 1st 1901 by the federation of six self-governing colonies, or dominions, of the British Crown. In fact a Jubilee of this event was held in 1951 - how come only 37 years later Australia is celebrating a Bicentennary? But the political federation of some former colonies by an act of the British parliament at Westminster is not the stuff of celebrations. It is not the

stuff of national myths - like the American Revolution's overthrow of the British colonial rule celebrated in the USA's Bicentenary.

What will be celebrated is the Australian national myth of the colonial era: of brave explorers and tough pioneers, 'opening up' and 'settling' a new, 'empty', and vast country. But what 1988 really means, is the beginning of an invasion. An invasion that began the near total genocide of the Australian Aborigines. An invasion begun with the establishment of a brutal prison colony on the 26th of January 1788 at Botany Bay, New South Wales.

WHITE AUSTRALIA HAS A BLACK HISTORY

Before 1788, Australia was inhabited by Aborigines spread over the entire continent and the island of Tasmania, organised in the family, clan, and tribal groupings. There were up to 500 language groups. Relations within and between groups were regulated by complex systems of lore and law based on the 'Dreamtime'.

The Dreamtime is a set of creation myths that provide the basis for tribal organisation, social obligations and behaviour, relationships with the land and provide a link between past, present, and future.

Group decisions were made by councils of elders (usually men), with women participating in their own social and ritual activites as well as the social, economic and cultural life of the whole group

Aboriginal life and culture varied greatly over the whole continent. In coastal south eastern Australia, some Aboriginal tribes lived in quite densely populated areas, in semi-permanent stone huts, wore skin garments from head to foot and cultivated certain grasses for seed. In the central desert areas, smaller groups ranged over large areas hunting kangaroo, larger marsupials and lizards, and gathering wild grasses, roots, grubs etc, moving constantly in search of water and carrying only essential tools. Due to natural factors and cultural responses to them, the Aboriginal population was kept relatively low - estimates

Aboriginal camp in Arnhemland

range between 300,000 and 3,000,000 in 1788.

Despite being spread over a vast area, complex and extensive relationships existed between Aboriginal tribes as well as within them: song cycles incorporating different parts of the Dreaming associated with different areas spread right across the continent; information about events moved across hundreds of miles in short periods; goods, mostly of a symbolic nature, were traded over large areas and occasionally large numbers of Aborigines got together for ritual communal gatherings (corroborees). Food was traditionally shared amonst all members of the group in Aboriginal society, with no desire for the 'private' accumulation of 'wealth'. 'Work' was only carried out as necessary, to provide for needs, and the rest of the time was devoted to community life and culture.

The Aboriginal relationship to land is an important and complex one. Land is the basis of Aboriginal economics - through cultivation, hunting and gathering, and the extensive modification of the environment through the use of fire. Indeed the use of fire to promote certain grasses and trees, and along with them, grazing animals like wallaby and kangaroo, was so extensive that it has been argued that the ecology of Australia is the greatest single human artifact! Land also provides the basis of Aboriginal social organisation. Certain clans have rights to, and certain responsibilities for, the use and care of certain sites. Often rights to hunt and gather are non-exclusive within the tribal group, while rights and responsibilities for sacred sites and the Dreaming stories, associated with a particular place, come under the control of a particular clan and are passed on orally by clan members. Thus the land provided the basis for Aboriginal economics, law, social organisation, culture and spirituality - the whole of their lives.

INVASION AND GENOCIDE

An English view of the Myall Creek massacre (London 1841)

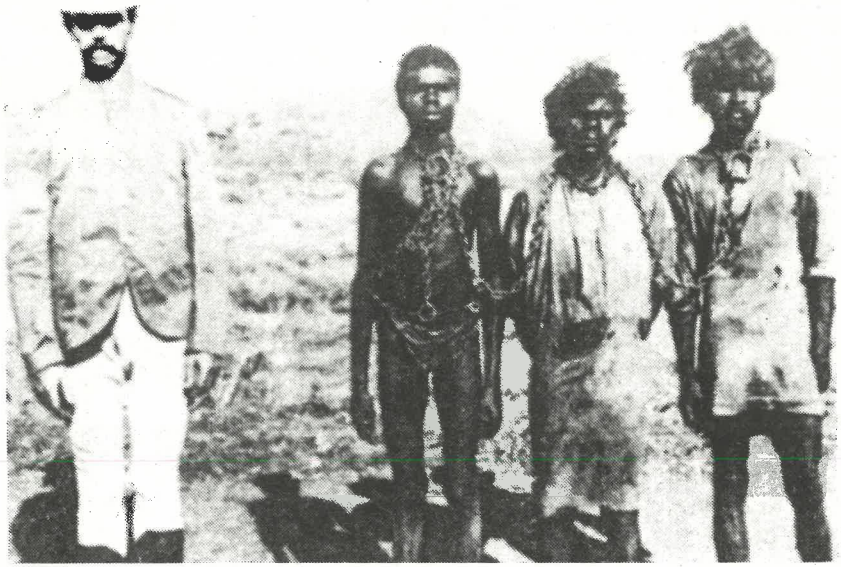
The arrival of the white invaders in Australia marked the beginning of one of the most extensive examples of genocide in history. Within a hundred years as much as 80% of the Aboriginal population (some people have even suggested more) had been directly killed by the white invaders or had died as a consequences of the invasion. Death came from a number of sources. Sometimes from random killings arising from particular clashes over use of land, water, etc. or from whole-sale slaughter of large groups of Aborigines by bands of whites. These were Aborigine hunts, conducted with much the same attitude as kangaroo hunts. Whether officially sanctioned, as they often were, or not, almost no whites were tried for the murder of Aborigines. There are many reports of incredible brutality: in one incident passed on by the few survivors of one Aboriginal group, Aboriginal babies were buried up to their necks and their heads kicked off in a competition to see how far they would go, the women were

systematically raped - then killed by being stabbed internally through the vagina, finally the men had their genitals cut off and were left to bleed to death.

Disease was another major cause of death, as Aborigines had no immunity to European diseases. Smallpox and venerial diseases particularly took a huge toll, rapidly reaching beyond the frontiers of white settlement. Death by disease was assisted in many cases by the distribution of blankets to Aboriginal groups that had been infected with smallpox, scarlet fever or some other disease.

Poison was also systematically used to kill Aborigines. Poisoned flour was distributed or, more commonly, vital water holes were poisoned. Again, whole Aboriginal groups were slaughtered by such means.

When a new area was taken over (settled) the whites quickly moved onto the best plains with water access. The Aborigines were forced onto higher, dryer more marginal lands. Aborigines were often shot attempting to



Aborigines in chains near Roeburne (W.A.)

get to rivers or water holes. The whites also drove off or killed the native animals and replaced them with sheep and cattle. An untold number died of starvation when pressure on water and food supplies became to great as large numbers of Aborigines gathered around the few sources of water and food.

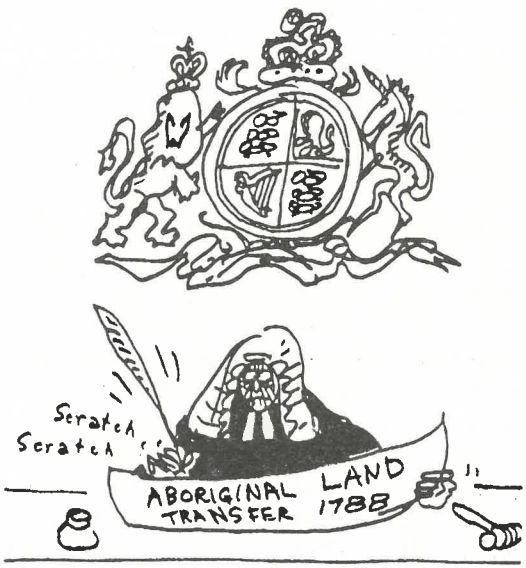
Aboriginal women frequently raped and often abducted as sexual and personal slaves to sealers, sheperds, and fencers. In some cases Aboriginal women were encouraged to offer themselves to white men in an attempt to appeasement. Others went voluntarily, because unlike the men, their sexuality gave them access to white society and goods. Not on the same basis as white women, of course. This was all a source of great tension within Aboriginal society and between whites and blacks, contributing to the breakdown of tribal society and the source of reprisal killings as Aboriginal men sought to punish whites for the abuse of Aboriginal women.

Aboriginal sacred sites were sometimes unwittingly, but also often deliberately, desecrated. Ritual life was severely disrupted - with any large gathering of blacks seen as a potential threat to the settler communities, a nd therefore dispersed - often brutally. The passing of Dreamtime lore from one generation to the next was disrupted with the death and dispersal of so many members of tribal groups. The psychological and social effects of dispossession from their traditional lands had a huge impact, leading to demoralisation, and exacerbated by alcohol (of which they had no experience) led to the progressive disintegration of tribal life for many aboriginal groups.

The economic motive for the total take over of Aboriginal Australia was reinforced by the ideology of social Darwinism prevalent in Britain at that time. Social Darwinism suggested that there was a heirarchy of evolution in humans and that upper-class western white males were the natural superiors, of all other classes and races. When ecountering the Aborigines, with less sophisticated technologies, with no centralised political structures and no fixed individual ownership of

land, the view was taken that they were a primitive 'stone age' people that would inevitably die out. Therefore, the killing of Aborigines became not murder, but the inevitable result of a clash between a superior and progressive culture and an inferior and dying cultre. These attitudes have remained in Australia for a long time. Up to a few years ago most school children were taught that the Aborigines were a dying race and their only hope for survival was by assimilation into white society. In a Bicentennial event in Portsmouth, England, in 1987 , Aboriginal dancers who performed, (without being informed beforehand that it was a Bicentenary event) were described in the program as a "pre-civilisation" people! Only recent developments in anthropology, ecological thought, and the forceful statements of Aborigines themselves, have led some to realise what an achievement Aboriginal civilisation was and is.

Such ideology also provided the basis of the view that Australia was "Terra Nullus" (vacant land) and therefore that it was not necessary for the whites to enter into any treaties with the Aborigines - learning perhaps from New Zealand, the USA and Canada. Deciding in the case of Australia to grab the whole continent. Also prevalent was the ideology that the



ROBBERY UNDER ARMS

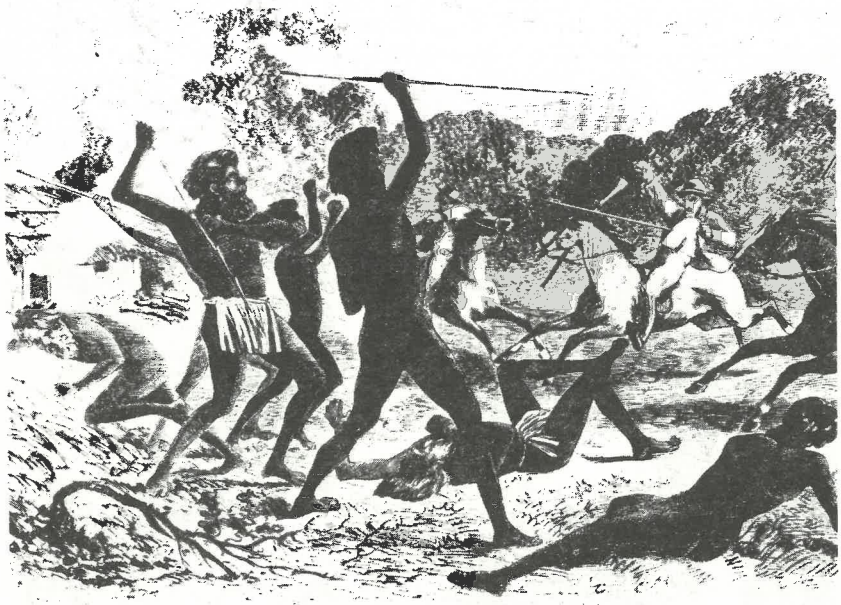
Aborigines were a static culture that was overwhelmed by the superior white civilisation, and therefore no resistance was offered. In fact the Aboriginal response was complex, including very strong resistance to the invasion. The refusal to acknowlege Aboriginal land use, tribal organisation and guerilla resistance to the invasion laid the basis for the denial of any rights to land to the Aborigines - a struggle they are still fighting in this Bicentenial year!

RESPONSES AND RESISTANCE

Initially Aborigines accepted the whites - not realizing they were going to stay - as all previous contact had suggested - indeed even the initial convict colony at Botany Bay quickly moved to Port Jackson. When it became clear that the settlers were there to stay Aborigines often applied their traditional responses of hospitality and sharing. These soon became inappropriate when the settlers proved that they had no intention of sharing their goods and animals, and were intent on denying Aborigines access to their own lands and water. Violence - beatings and shootings by the whites quickly followed disputes, starting cycles of retaliation and retribution. Initially, it seems Aborigines applied traditional values of an eye for an eye, attacking particular whites responsible for particular rapes, killings or other violence. It became clear that the whites did not adhere to this code of justice, that the theft of a sheep or an individual reprisal would be met with massive attacks on blacks. Noteing also the indiscriminate massacres, a change of tactics occured and in many areas, all whites came to be seen as enemies. What followed this development in many areas was an extensive guerilla war that cost 100's perhaps 1000's of settlers lives. The Aborigines had quickly learnt they were outgunned and so adapted tactics that often involved waiting weeks to catch an individual unarmed, and

attacking farms and settlements when they were most vulnerable. This resistance has rarely been recognised in this country.

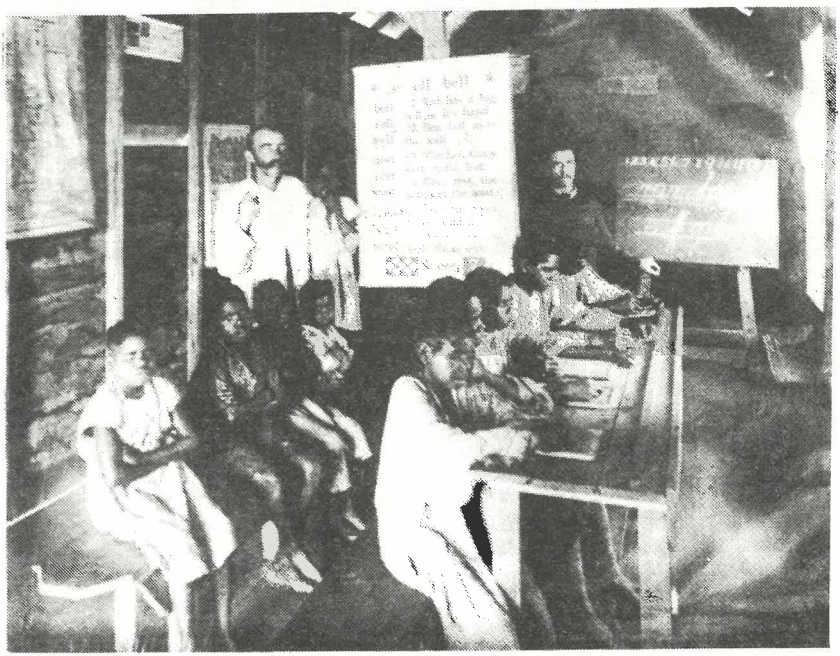
Many Aborigines continued to try to accomodate the whites, but most often they were met with misunderstanding, disregard and racism.



- Aboriginal resistance began 1788 ....

'PROTECTION AND ASSIMILATION'

By the 1850's most coastal areas of Aboriginal Australia had been invaded, and the outright slaughter stopped, although incidents of attacks on Aboriginal groups were reported up to the 1930's in Queensland and the Northern Territory. By 1900, most of the continent had been colonised and only a hand full of Aborigines in more remote areas, or on islands, lived in tribal ways. Most Aborigines were gathered into some 250 mission stations or reserves across the country. Groups who did not share languages and for whom it was taboo to have contact with, were thrown together. These state and church missions were characterised by christian moralism



Winning hearts and minds? (Aboriginal schoolchildren 1894)

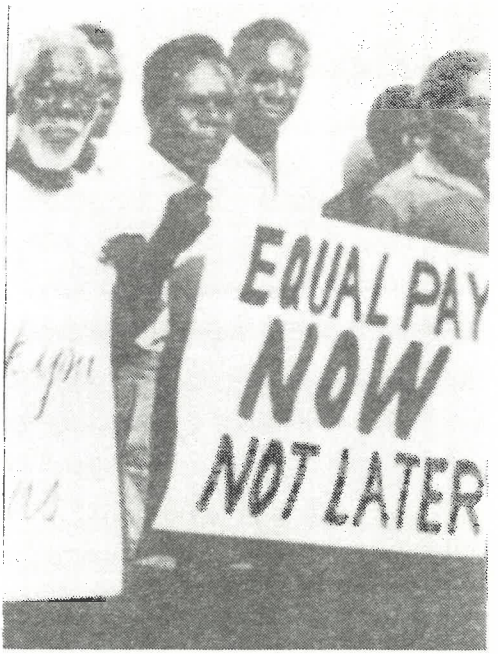
and indoctrination; tribal language and customs were broken down through forcible seperation of families, enforced use of English and white customs etc; poor food, housing and medicine; preventable diseases, (such as TB, leprocy, etc); managerial incompetence; graft and economic and sexual exploitation. under the official policy of "protection". On cattle stations, Aborigines worked for sugar, flour, tea and tobacco - not wages - and received no support from the strong trade union movement. This form of 'apartheid' on missions and reserves was even studied by visiting South Africans - to get ideas for dealing with their own blacks!

After 50 to 70 years of neglect under the title of 'protection', the official policy shifted to one of 'assimilation' in the 1920's and 30's. Aboriginal families were broken up, with children taken to institutions to be educated. Adolescent Aboriginal women were taken 1000's of miles to cities and put into the homes of rich whites in an attempt to create a black servant class. Yet despite the assimilationist policy few resources were put into the education, training, health and nutritional needs of Aborigines - or into challenging prejudice and institutional racism. Unemployment, alcoholism and preventable diseases were endemic.

On May 1st 1946, 800 Aboriginal pastoral workers in the Pilbarra region of northern Western Australia went on strike for wages rather than just pay in sugar, flour, tea and tobacco. Many never returned to the sheep stations as workers - surviving for 30 or 40 years on their own mining ventures. In the early 60's Aborigines at Wattie Creek in the Northern Territory (owned by Britians richest man, Lord Vesty) struck for wages - and also demanded some of their own land back. It is from here that the beginnings of the modern land rights movement are marked.

Aboriginal struggles from this time including the historic 1938 Aboriginal rights meeting in Sydney (at the time of the sesquicentenary - 150 years- of white occupation) have been largely neglected by white historians and policy makers.

Only in 1962 did Aboriginal stockmen win the struggle for the right to recieve wages, and it wasn't until 1968 that these people were counted in the census or had the right to vote. For 180 years they had not even been citizens in their own land. Twenty years later they are being asked to 'celebrate' invasion, dispossession, attempted physical and cultural genocide, years of official neglect and racism!



Aboriginal pastoral workers demand basic wage in the 1960's

AUSTRALIA: THE PRISON

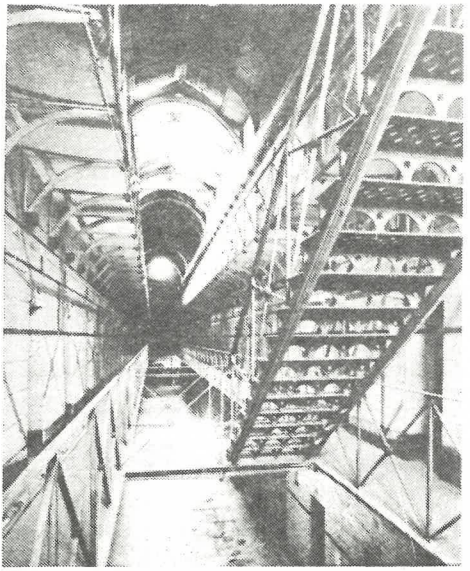
The founding of white Australia began with a penal colony, and within the first fifty years of the colonisation, prisons were established along the east coast as Britain sought to expel some of the social problems created by the extreme poverty due to the class system in British cities. Minor theft, along with more serious crime, could bring a sentence of 7 years transportation to the colonies in Australia - with no return ticket. Poor Irish peasants resisting the British colonisation of their country joined the poor from Britain's cities.

What was created in Australia was one of the most brutal regimes known - comparable in severity, if not scale, to some of the contemporary dictatorships like South Africa and Chile. The military rulers of the colony had total control of the prisoners' lives. Hanging was common for more major offences, and flogging - up to 50 lashes with the 'cat-o-nine-tails' - was used for minor insubordination or resistence. Other punishments were used, such as long periods of solitary confinement on bread and water in freezing stone cells.

The prisoners were used for slave labour - quarrying, farming, building, etc. Often, they were harnessed in teams to draw a plough or pull the soldiers around on wooden railways. Rations were meagre, and many starved or died of disease and exhaustion. Women prisoners were expected to provide sexual services to their guards and the free settlers to which they were assigned, and were often raped if they did not comply. They could buy their pardon by marrying a free settler or guard - trading one form of servitude for another.

Despite, and perhaps because of, being victims of social Darwinist attitudes, and of a viscious penal regime, the convicts participated many times in brutal attacks on the Aborigines.

Active resistance to the penal regime was dealt with severely - as was the case with the Castle Hill Rebellion in where up to 200 convicts were killed. Passive resistance was more common - loosing tools, poor quality work and working slowly - the origin of the term 'doing the government stroke', which remains a characteristic form of resistance to exploitation of the Australian working class to this day. The penal regime was dismantled after pressure from liberals in Britain, and from freed (ticket-of-leave) convicts in Australia, as well because of its proven inefficiency. It is ironic that one of the official Bicentenary events is the First International Congress on Corrections which will discuss modern prison management and future directions for jail systems! The emphasis will certainly be on modern, humane imprisonment - denying the continuing cruelty of imprisonment.



Australian jail 1880's still the same in the 1980's

Infact in 1987 and early 1988 Australia's prisons have exploded -- with riots, fires and hostage 'crises'. In Victoria's Pentridge Prison four prisoners died in a fire protesting the conditions in the ultra modern 'K Division'- a dehumanising electronic zoo. In NSW's Parklea Prison and W.A.'s Freemantle jail the riots, fires and taking prison warders captive seem to have been sparked by continuing bashings of prisoners. At Queensland's Boggo Rd jail the riots and fires were in response to the re-opening of the notorious underground cells (the 'black hole') apparently in an attempt by the QLD government to intimidate Aboriginal protestors against the Bicentenial World Expo '88.

Meanwhile, Aborigines have the highest imprisonment rate of any group in Australia - thirteen times higher, on average nationally, twenty times higher in some states, like South Australia.

SOUTH AFRICA ? ..... NO, AUSTRALIA.

THE BOSSES HISTORY IS THE WORKERS MISERY

One picture of Australian history that will not be seen in large colour posters, or photographic narratives, is a line of police and military shooting down 'sanguinary (bloody) workers like dogs'.* The forementioned description was spoken with forthright approval by Bruce Smith, a NSW cabinet member in the 1890's.

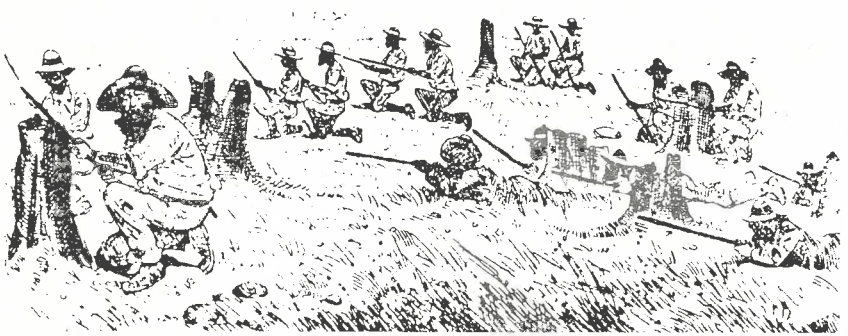
Police protecting scabs from striking maritime workers — Sydney 1878

The workers were 10,000 striking shearers and dockworkers who were forcibly dispersed, when they tried to prevent non-union labour from delivering wool to the docks. Pastoralists in a typically capitalist manner, were attempting to undermine organised labour, by employing non-union members on a contract basis, which

included lower wages and lessened conditions. Their aims were summed up by William Lane; "capitalists know very well that if they can compel unionists to work with non-unionists or non-union goods, they can always persecute the unionists quietly but effectively, and thus terrify enough into non-unionism, to make unions if they linger on, practically inoperative."**

Before the 1890's many Australian workers had been able to gain several concessions from employers, like the eight hour day and minimum wages due to labour shortages and economic growth. In the 1890's economic depression saw an oversupply of labour and the true colours of capitalism, attempts were made to denude all conditions. Unfortunately the consequent forming of the Labor Party only exacerbated curbing of worker militancy as direct action was channeled into a futile belief that worker representation in Parliament was the way to gain economic equality. Workers were talked into believing that arbitration was more effective than the 'general strike.' Arbitration as we still see today very rarely rules in workers favour.

From here on worker history and Labor history separates. Labor history is about constitutional changes and reform, which are slow and hardly achieve economic justice. Sadly it is this which forms the bulk of the



Australia 1988 'one nation' Australia 1891 'Australian' armed shearers prepare to meet 'Australian' armed police during shearers strike

working class history in Australia. Militancy was, is, sporadic usually failing its objectives. This is due to employers successfully managing to keep the workforce divided. Workers still put their faith in a party which Lenin described as a 'national bourgeoisie party engaged in strengthening central government.'

In 1928-30 the bosses used scab labour (often recent immigrants) and then force to deal with striking dockworkers. Again workers were fired on, one was killed. Coalworkers were seriously injured by police baton charges. Dockworkers, miners and timberworkers were all told that they would have to bear the brunt of the economic depression, by working longer hours for less pay and diminished working conditions. In the 1980's workers are given the same story. Employers are trying to undermine trade unions by; in Muginberri employers have won the right to draw up their own contracts with employees, and in 1986 the Cain Labor government in Victoria used police in their attempt to destroy the most militant building union, the Builders Labourers fed. Since they have been basically successful, many conditions in the industry, especially those involving safety, have been eroded.

The 'new right' claims it is gearing up to destroy all trade union power, so that they can more effectively exploit workers.

Labour history as opposed to 'worker' history is a safe history. This is because the slow gains achieved through parliamentary reform and proffered as our pride and joy, profile only, the non-violent aspects of 'workers struggles, which conform to to a rational ordering of society that the state wishes to project. State brutality used to successfully repress militant resistance by workers does not reflect well as part of its present image as a paternal benefactor dedicated to the betterment of 'all' its people.

Any serious attempts by Australians to gain economic equality through direct action have been rendered acceptable by placing them in harmless roles as folk heroes. The hungry swagman is portrayed falsely as a

They collared the scabs
and broke their toes,
Smashed their legs
and burnt their clothes.
The Barrier boys said:
Oh blow me tight,
We'll have the life
of a scab some night,
And it will jolly well
serve them right.

Broken Hill
miner's strike 1909

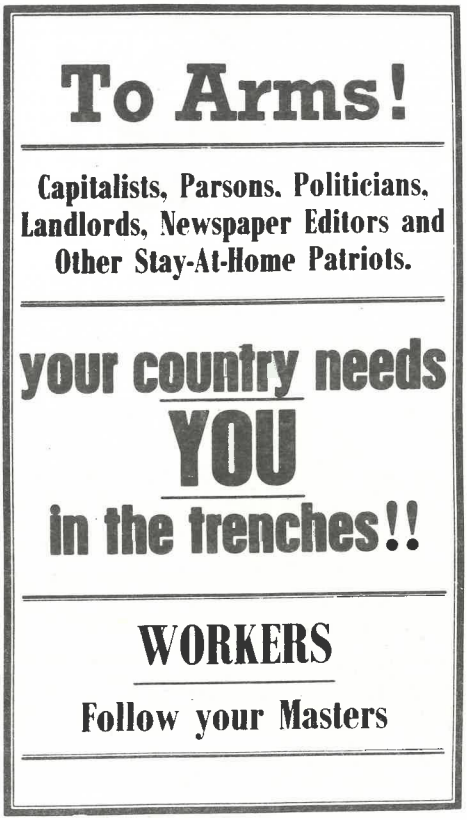
jolly person, who when he tried to feed himself, quite justly, destroyed himself when he was caught out by the landowner and his military dogs. Workers who threw bombs, are denied recognition of the desperateness of their situation, and simply classed as mad anarchists/communists.

Worker history and the failure to gain economic equality will not be a feature of the Bicentennial. This country prides itself too much on its Trade Unionist tradition. Trade unions were and are tolerated by the state, because they are reformist and sometimes pro-capitalist in nature, and most importantly they help to keep the workers divided by trades. A real threat to the state exists in the formation of one big Workers union, where all workers recognise their common aims and rights, and fight together to get them. The ideas of revolutionary unionism, embody the one big union concept, and refuse to accept divisions of race and gender. In the 1890's the Unemployed Workers Union in Melbourne were the first to organise women along equal lines with men.

Collecting for workless women 1915

"Where many trade unions refused membership to coloured workers (ie the miners union) the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) which was first founded in Australia in 1908, did not. The IWW was an internationalist movement and during the closing years of World War 1, they grew to be the strongest and most significant revolutionary movement the Australian working class had yet known."***

Their catchcrys were 'One Big Union', and 'Workers of the World Unite'. They attracted workers tired of fighting a capitalist war and who were realising the ineffectiveness of the trade union movement. In 1916 a bill was passed preventing association with anyone who advocated overthrow of the government. This was designed by Hughes, the then Prime Minister of the national labour government to stifle



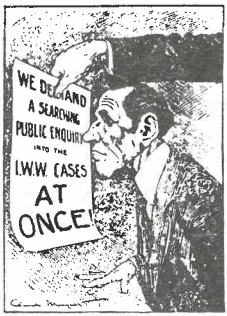
ONE BIG UNION

PROPAGANDA LEAGUE

KING,
BEASANT,
LARKIN,
REEVES,
GLYNN,
FAGIN,

1916 to 1931!

Lost their Liberty that You and I Should be FREE.



No Side-Stepping This!

MOORE,
BEATTY,
McPHERSON,
GRANT,
TEEN,
HAMILTON.

1916 to 1931!

Their Fight was for Education, Organisation, Emancipation.

Demands the Immediate Release of their Twelve Mates in Jail

the influence of the IWW. In 1916 12 members of the IWW were arrested and later convicted of arson, and jailed, most of them were later acquitted and released in one of the biggest political frame-ups in the history of Australia.

International unionism was and still is a real threat to the ruling classes. The labour party served to co-opt workers out of direct confrontation, and to accept slow, minimal reforms. During the decade of women; 1975-1985, women were granted the grand total of 1% increase in employment.

If Australians had more understanding of why trade unionism failed and is failing now, in its attempts to create economic equality, and if they had easier access to ideas on more effective alternatives foe social organisation, they may start organising more determinedly against national corporatism. There is no way this government, which is heavily backed by 'big business' wants to have embarrasing photos, posters or histories exhibited.

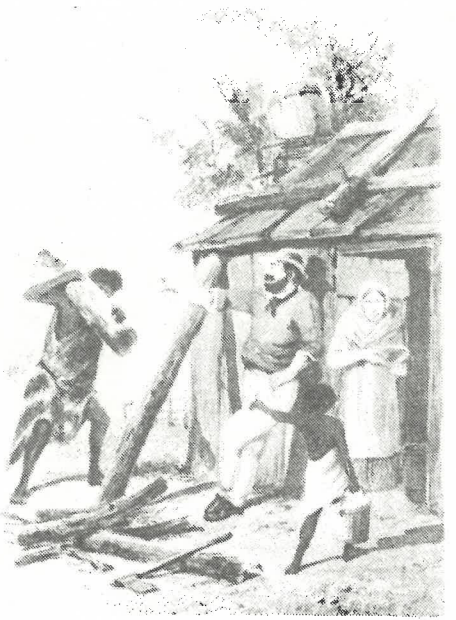
* Ed Suzanne Miller, 'Readings in Australian history. The occupation of a continent', Blackburne, 1979 Page 167.
** Ibid, page 168.
*** Ian Turner. 'Sydney's burning', Sydney 1969 page 12.

CELEBRATION OF RACISM?

Australia's racist attitudes have ascended from the beginning of the countries economic development. They reflect the fears of a capitalist society having to share its wealth with other workers in the world. In the 1900's, the concepts of social Darwinism were succesfully coalesced with the existing racial antagonisms, and utilised by proponants of the 'white Australia' policy. Asian and Polynesian cultures were rendered as distinctly inferior; coloured immigration, racist politicians claimed would debase white, British civilisation in Australia.

The exploitation of Aboriginal land, has always been the basis of the Australian economy, and the relative prosperity of workers, and bosses, in the 'lucky country' has been in part due to this original theft.

As well in the 18th century British officers attempted to force aborigines to work as servants. They deplored them for their laziness, especially when it was still possible for aborigines to disappear after they had had enough of white mans bullying. Others were pressed into working the land, and many were cheated by the settlers. There is no doubt that Aborigines were used as slave



labour to work the large sheep stations, the backbone of Australia's economy.
In 1946 Aborigines forced to work on stations in the Pilbarra region, Western Australia, for little or no wages went on strike, many still consider themselves to be on strike today.

Aboriginal women also suffered constant sexual assault, often finding themselves prisoners in settlers homes.

Cheap, coloured labour was used in the 1840's, by New South Wales pastoralists who had lost their supply of convicts. The government also used Chinese in the Northern Territory mines, they were paid one twelfth the rate paid to Europeans. The conditions of the mines were considered too severe for European miners. The Chinese prospecting in the southern goldfields of Victoria and NSW were tolerated until surface gold began to disappear. They then found themselves competing directly with white settlers. During this time all Asians were banned from joining the Miners protection league. From the 1890's Pacific Islanders were dragged into Queensland to work the sugar

Anti-Chinese cartoon 1886

plantations. Their lot became a daily grind of hard manual labour, under severe conditions for meagre wages. If the sugar farmers had used white labour, they would have had to pay higher wages, lessening the profits.

White workers were convinced that 'coloured' labour threatened their own small amount of privileges and rights. Even when the Chinese sent money to the shearers, to aid them in their strike, the shearers refused to show any form of solidarity. At the same time, bourgeois merchants were having to compete with Asian traders.

Both groups mobilised against coloured immigration, adding fuel to the Nationalist Party's 'White Australia' policy. Working class attitudes to coloured immigration were reflected in papers like the Brisbane Worker,*

*The Brisbane Worker was started in 1890, by the Associated Workers of Queensland. It was originally edited by William Lane.

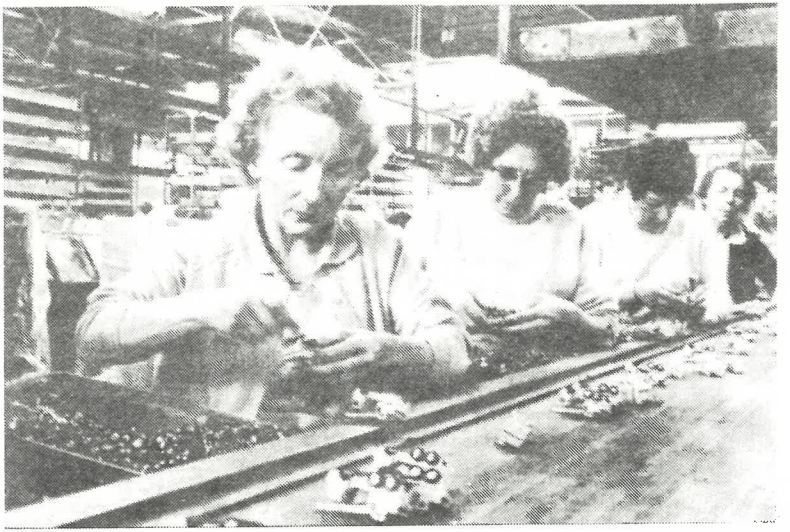
which attributed pauperism and strikes to the 'coloured curse.' In 1920 the Nationalist government passed a series of Bills preventing non-europeans immigration. Many of the Islanders in Queensland were forcibly returned to the islands.

During WWI the anti-conscription movement, sadly, gained much of its support through racist propaganda. Instead of focusing around workers being used as fodder in the capitalist war, many proponents drummed up fears of a 'yellow invasion' should Australian men leave for Europe.

The only reason why workers then should have suffered from non-white immigration, is the same reason why they suffer from it today, which is employers unscrupulous use of cheap labour. Many immigrants suffered white invasions and/or exploitation in their own countries. Immigrants from europe were fleeing religious, economic and political oppression, results of imperialist as well as growing capitalist exploitation. When they arrived here they often found themselves being used to break worker militancy. They provided an oversupply of labour, allowing employers to lower wages and conditions, (in the 1930's they sometimes found themselves being used as scab labour.

In the 1950's and 1960's immigrants provided controlled labour for building up national industrial infrastructure to provide the basis for capitalist expansion. Initially after WWII, immigrants had to work for three years for private or public employers where ever they were sent. Many worked on major projects like the Snowy Mountains hydro-electricity scheme. They worked in dangerous and appalling conditions. The immigrants demands for consumer goods - houses, refrigerators, televisions, cars - provided the basis for the consumer boom of the 1960's.

Even today new immigrants are lumbered with low paid, laborious tasks, despite any qualifications for highly skilled or professional work. They do the work established 'australian' workers will no longer do. Also, alot of Australian manufacturing is done offshore,



because larger profits are made this way. Australian workers are told that Asians are the cause of unemployment, and then, paradoxically, if workers do not lower their wages and conditions, more manufacturing will be shipped over to neighbouring countries, eg., The Phillipines, Thailand and South Korea.

Most Australians are happy to exploit fellow workers in neighbouring countries, by buying cheaply produced goods and women, yet they still refer to them collectively as the 'yellow peril'. By treating them like this, Australian workers rarely stop to consider that they are cutting their own throats, by keeping the working class divided in its struggle for economic equality.

The bicentennial board is pushing multiculturalism as one of the major themes. This is farcical when the events being promoted as most important are those involving the anglo-saxon invasion. The multiculturalist push is nothing but a blinker to help Australians ignore the fact that they live in a racially divided country.

CELEBRATE TODAY?

If we take a closer look at the present social and economic situation of today, there's nothing much to celebrate. Our living standard, as working people, has fallen dramatically in the last couple of years, while profits haven't been this high for quite some while. Labour 'costs' to the bosses are down 8.8% in six years - most of it in our wages. Official unemployment is at around 8%, this being now known as full employment. Our Australian government's response has been to blame the unemployed for their situation.

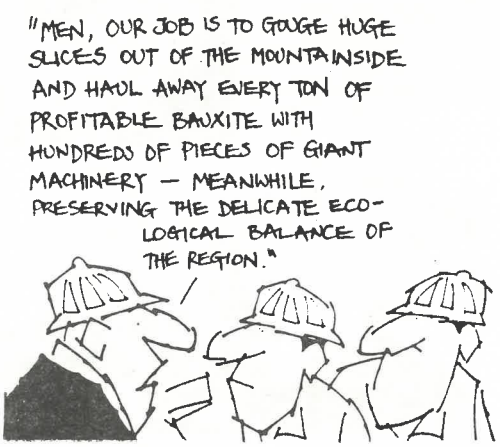
Thus, the under 18 year old's dole has been cut to a meagre job search allowance; people now leaving their jobs 'voluntarily' will have to wait 13 weeks for the dole - introducing a form of industrial conscription - forcing people to stay in poorly paid and unpleasant jobs; hundreds of people have been chucked off the dole in a witch hunt by Department of Social Security ('SS') flying squads.

With this rising unemployment womens' participation in the workforce is presented as a burden in private employers and the state. Although women only get two thirds of the wages of men, and many women need employment to support themselves and families, provision of child-care services has been cut (unlike in wartime when child-care centres were provided to get women into factories!)

The politicians have repeatedly said things have to get worse before they get any better. Is this what we are celebrating?

Overall there is an increase in the commercialisation of life in Australia. American and other foreign ownership of industries and influence on the economy ensures mega-profits for them and less and less choice and control for ordinary people. The concentration of ownership in the print media means that most of our written news and information is in the hands of two large and one small press empires. We are exhorted to identify with the bosses economic interests. The inherent instability of the world finance - capitalist system - shown by the stock market crash of 1987 (1929, 1890's etc) - means we are told we'll have to tighten our belts, wait longer for minimal wage rises, etc. Whole areas of welfare provision and public services are being cut back - Medicare and free pharmaceuticals, public transport services, libraries, etc. Meanwhile Australia has more millionaires than ever before.

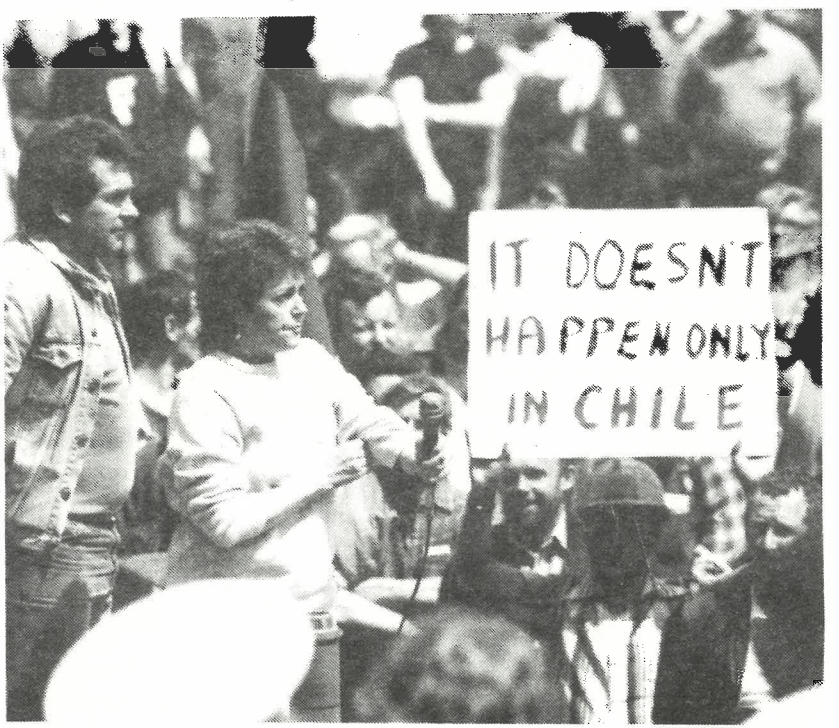
The whole ecology of Australia is heavily under threat. Unique rainforests are disappearing with the demands of the wood-chip industries. Australia has been de-forested faster than any other continent - 80% in 200 years! The Conservative National Farmers Federation has recently warned that the land cannot take anything like the damage that has been done in the last 200 years of intensive cultivation. This abuse of the land (over-grazing, fertilizers, etc), the continuing expansion into marginal areas



has been the mainstay of Australia's economy! Australia remains firmly in the Western alliance. At least four 'joint' U.S.-Australian radio ground-stations are first strike nuclear targets. Australian cities regularly play host to U.S. nuclear armed and powered warships - and with the intermediate range weapons (INF) treaty in Europe the pressure is on for a big naval-based nuclear build-up in Asia and the Pacific! Australian cities may also be targeted in a nuclear war - to deny the U.S. ports, communicators and industrial back-up.

As things get worse, more and more people will be forced to fight back. But if we look at those who are fighting back now, we realise that it is a struggle that will meet a lot of opposition : The militancy of the Builders Labourers Federation (BLF) got it de-registered as a union and its funds confiscated in a raid by the Victorian state's police. Alot of BLF members are now blacklisted - 'banned' from working in the building industry. In Queensland it is illegal to take industrial action, like picketing and to hold demonstrations and marches. Police are being more and more widely used on picket lines and evictions.

While the Australia (ID) Card failed due to mistakes in drafting legislation, and in the face of growing opposition, there is still a threat to introduce a universal unique identity numbering system in the form



Demonstration after police raid on builders Labourers Federation offices 1987

of an 'improved tax-file number'. Those of us that have lived in countries where ID cards or numbers already exist, know very well that the aim is not to reduce fraud but to control people. To make us stand in line.

As the economic situation worsens for the rest of us, while the ecology declines, while Australia remains part of the U.S. war system, while injustices continue to exist, so the police state will grow in this country.

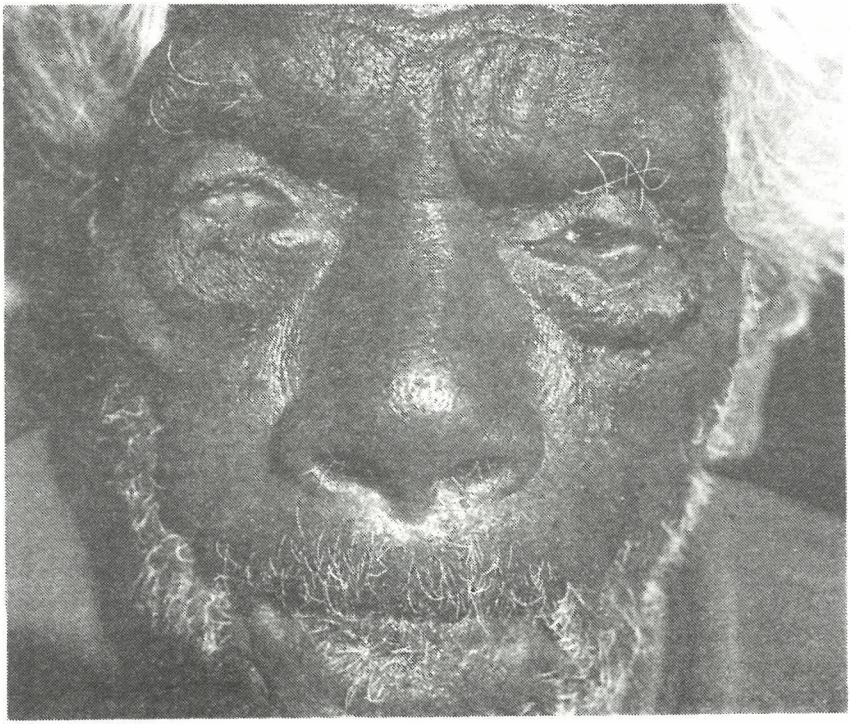
Already state Labor Party governments have increased police powers in areas of phone tapping, arrest and interrogation, private ownership of guns, and many other areas under the guise of the campaigns against drugs, car accidents and 'senseless' violence. Nobody is asking in 1988 what kind of society is it that creates the need for drugs, fast cars and indiscriminate violence. Some people have been surprised that its state and national Labor Party governments that have done all this. However it was the Labor-National Hughes government that created the Federal Police during World War 1 - in response to being hit by an egg thrown by a member of the IWW in an anti-conscription demonstration! And it was the Labor Party that created the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (A.S.I.O.) - Australia's secret political police.

The developing police state fits well with the Labor Party's vision of the emerging corporate state. That, in our best interests, our lives will come to be ruled by an integrated leadership of politicians, big bureaucrats, big businessmen and big union bosses. The ACTU, for example, sits on innumerable tripartite (government, bosses and unions) boards, and its Australia reconstructed calls for only 20 mega-unions, using money from defered pay rises for capitalist investment, etc.

The Bicentenary, with its emphasis on national unity, in glossing over class, race and ethnic differences, by re-writing the history of the disposession of Aborigines, of racism and working peoples struggles, is designed to play an important part in making these developments acceptable.

WE HAVE SURVIVED THE WHITE MAN'S WORLD

For Aboriginal people there's even less to celebrate, even if they have been Australian citizens since 1968. Apart from the fact that the bicentenary is the celebration of the taking of their land and killing them in order to do that,the present situation of aboriginal people still leaves a lot to be desired. Nothing shows this better than the health conditions of aboriginal people. Life expectancy of NSW Aborigines is 20 years less than non-Aborigines. Infant mortality is 3 times higher in their communities. Disease such as Trachoma (which causes blindness), Otitus Media (ear disease) and

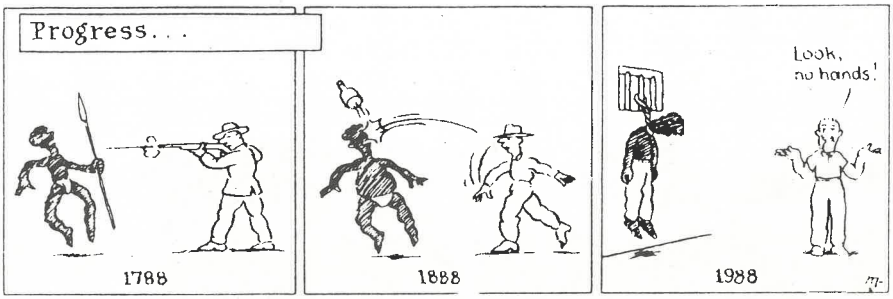


Trachoma, a preventable eye disease

Syphilis are much higher in the Aboriginal communities than in the non-Aboriginal ones. Their leprosy rate is the highest in the world.

Apart from alot of Aborigines dying from preventable and curable diseases, many are dying in police custody. At least 98 Aborigines have died in police or prison cells since 1983. Many of these deaths occur in highly suspicious circumstances, others are clearly killings by police and prison wardens.

A Royal Commission into black deaths in custody has begun. Aboriginal people are hoping it will not be another white-wash.



The main causes for these Aboriginal deaths- from ill health and in custody - are poverty, dislocation, institutionalized injustice and racism.

· Against all those odds Aboriginal people have been fighting back under the banner of land rights, self determination and self management.

The objectives of the various groups involved in the land rights issue differs very widely. For traditional Aborigines living on their ancestoral lands, 'land rights' means a claim to use and control their 'countries' for both religious and economic purposes. For Aborigines living on reserves, 'land rights' means a claim to ownership of the reserve land on which they have lived for a considerable time. For urban Aborigines 'land rights' means a claim for economic compensation for reparation for the taking of their lands in the past, and their oppression by white Australians. Since 1983 Aborigines have held title to more than 500,000 square kilometres of land, though it should be noted that a

The Aboriginal flag flies at Noonkanbah Western Australia, where Aborigines have defended their land against mining companies. The Aboriginal flag was first flown in 1972, at the Aboriginal tent embassy at parliament house. The black at the top represents the Aboriginal people, the yellow circle represents the sun and the red represents the land and the blood lost in its defence.

great deal of this land is desert or semi-desert. This is only a minority of Aborigines who have succeeded in getting land rights, not on their terms of course, but on the state governments terms.

Freehold title to land, however, does not cover mineral rights - and much land considered worthless a few years ago, is now subject to exploration and mining leases granted to big uranium, iron and bauxite mining corporations. Major confrontations have erupted over mining companies forcing themselves onto sacred Aboriginal lands that they have only recently re-aquired after years of dispossession!

Self determination means that they as a people want to determine the way they want to live, coming from a different economical, social, political and cultural background than the rest of the Australian population. One positive development is the 'out-station' movement

- where Aborigines have left towns, missions, Stations and settlements to return in small groups to their traditional lands that they have obtained through land-claims, or in some cases, land they have bought back! Here they can live in semi-traditional ways - teaching bush skills to their children, eating some bush 'tucker' (food), and dealing with white society from a distance and more on their terms. For instance, eating some store bought food, banning alchohol and access to petrol (drinking and petrol sniffing are problems in some settlements) and calling in white teachers, health workers, linguists and anthropologists on their terms.

Since the late seventies Aboriginal people have taken the initiative to establish their own health, childcare, media and legal organisations, to mention just a few. Fundamental to all these initiatives has been the desire to manage their own affairs and to solve particular problems affecting their communities which the government had more or less ignored. The state, after seeing these organisations become more or less independent from it's hold and structured in a way it finds threatening, has tried to undermine them and the work they do. The main way has been to fund these organisations with strings attached, thus gaining a certain control over them.

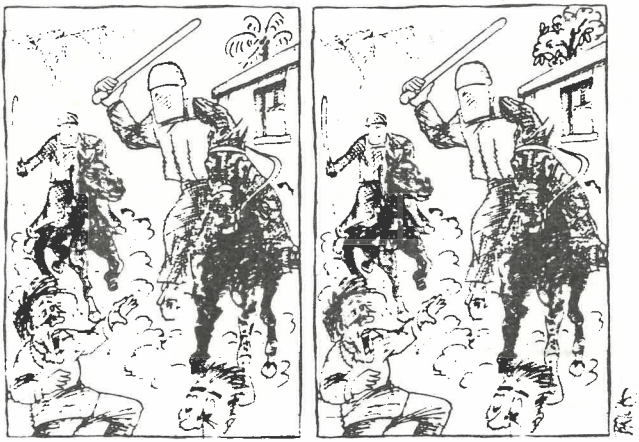
THERE'S NO UNITY IN NATIONALISM

The Australian Bicentenary celebrations are an attempt to whitewash the dirty marks in Australian history and society. The slogan 'Living Together', is farcical in light of all governments persistent refusal to acknowledge the needs of Aborigines, in favour of mining companies demands. Our society was and still is divided, by wealth, race and gender. In the early days of colonisation, there was division between convicts and officers, between rich squatters and poor settlers, between white and black, white and yellow. Today

these same divisions still exist. This point is being ignored, whole chunks of history are being treated in a shallow homogenised or distorted way. A most notable example was an image in 'The Age' (newspaper) of the descendents of the miners, merchants and military all standing together inside Eureka Stockade. "Now we're all together" was the message. What rubbish. Evidence has shown that the events at Eureka Stockade led to a police riot and troopers were still shooting miners and innocent bystanders two hours after the stockade had been occupied. It was a case of police over-reaction, and it is still something we see today when police find themselves in the frontlines of a class war, witness the police at an eviction or a picket line. We have never lived happily together and while capitalism exists we never shall.

Nationalism is a tool of capitalism. It creates a false sense of unity by developing loyalty and obedience to a nation state. But to think there is any form of unity under this system is absurd. Capitalism is international,

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE



Argentina (1982)

Britain 1984

Or Poland (1981)
or South Africa (1987)
Or Australia (1988)
Or .....

therefore exploitation and repression resulting from it are also international, so nationalism in no way benefits the working class. Rulers will sacrifice the workers of one nation in order to suppress the workers of another who have attempted to rebel against their situation. A recent example is Vietnam, where thousands of workers from Britain, the U.S. and Australia were forced to kill fellow workers in Vietnam and in return gain the glory of dying for their nation. Infact their nations were not in danger, but capitalist profits were, and it was capitalist exploitation that made the region (Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam) so unstable in the first place.

Australian workers are being told to lower their own conditions and wages in order that capitalists can compete more easily (profitably) with overseas nations. What we should be doing is showing international solidarity with all workers in order to raise their conditions and strengthen the positions of all of us. Already Australian wages are lower than those paid to workers in Japan, while Argentina's national income is similar to Australia's. So much for 'The Lucky Counrty'! If we lose any more of our hard won conditions, we will be little better off than our 'third world' relatives. We should infact be looking at the example of workers in The Phillipines and Korea whose resistance movements (by passing trade union structures) are taking better care of their workers.

Tactics used to keep workers divided in a nationalist state, ie. through racism and sexism, also works on an international basis. As long as the workers of one state are prepared to fight and degenerate the workers of another, they have little hope of standing against the internationally organised forces of capitalism. The Bicentenary is the celebration of a nation, you can bet the rulers of this nation will be celebrating their international solidarity with the rulers of other nations.

WHY WE OPPOSE THE BI-CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS?

The Anarcho-Syndicalist Federation is dedicated to working people gaining power over their own lives. We do not acknowledge any divisions of people through race or gender, and therefore see no point in dividing the world into a series of nation-states. The health of the planet and its people depends on mutual co-operation by all. A capitalist system can only benefit a few at the expense of the rest. Nationalism discourages mutual co-operation between different cultures and regions, it is more concerned about exacting our differences. For example, Australia's supposedly democratic system is better than Iran's despotism. But in fact women in Australia are only slightly better off in economic terms than women in Iran. And they still suffer badly from aggression, domination and exploitation.

The labor government is attempting to build a corporate state, where 20 'super' unions will supposedly work with the bosses to build Australia's economy. In actual fact what this means is that hugely centralised unions will be forced through government to negotiate more on the bosses terms, acting little in the workers interest but giving employers plenty of concessions and profits. We are opposed to this developing corporate state, we believe all workers should have access to the products of their labour, this can only be done if they organise themselves at work and where they live and take control of all production. Workers cannot gain equality and freedom by participating in nationalistic

celebrations. The celebrations are costing millions and who is benefitting? The levels of poverty are rising in this country. How many Bicentenary houses for the homeless are being built? How many bicentenary improvements in social services are being made? How many bicentenary tertiary schools are being opened? How much is being allocated to give asylum to political refugees as part of a bicentenary humanitarian project?

The list is endless. But the money is being spent on insulting re-enactments of the 'First Fleet', (how about a re-enactment of the first scarlet fever outbreak amongst Aborigines?), roads we don't need, (we could be developing less environmentally damaging forms of transport), on endless exhibitions, including the giant 25 million dollar road-show being sponsored by the Australian Bicentennial Commission and BHP. The workers are paying 19,000,000 through the federal government, but are expected to be grateful and thrilled that BHP is paying the other 6 million. So the celebrations have been farcicle, only about 7 of the 70 Tall Ships promised arrived in Melbourne, and organisation on the docks was terrible (Government is Chaos!). Don't be fooled by this paternalistic bullshit which is draining the pockets of workers, while encouraging them to remain divided from workers elsewhere. Boycott the Bicentennial, or better, sabotage it.

Advance Australia

Where?

RECOMENDED READING

Some of these books we have used to write this pamphlet. We have also included others that we feel are important. If you wish to know more about this subject we urge you to read some of them. Most of them cover topics which are generally ignored, and most of the books in the Aboriginal section are very recent and present very different views of Aboriginal history than those most white Australians have grown up with.

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- F.Robinson and B.York, The Black Resistance, Camberwell Vic, 1977.
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- R.W. Connel and T.H. Irving, Class Structure in Australian History, Melbourne, 1980.
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- J.Harris, The Bitter Fight: A Pictorial History of the Australian Labour Movement, Brisbane, 1970.
- M.Mc Murchy, M.Oliver and J.Thornley (EDs), For Love or Money: A Pictorial History of Women in Australia, Ringwood, Vic, 1983.
- Jack Mundey, Green Bans and Beyond, Sydney, 1981.
- Thomas, Taming the Concrete Jungle, Forest Lodge,NSW, 1983.

- Ian Turner, Industrial Labour and Politics, Canberra, 1965.
- Ian Turner, In Union is Strength, West Melbourne, 1976.
- Ian Turner, Sydney's Burning, Melburne, 1965, (revised edition, Sydney, 1969).
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RACISM AND MULTI-CULTURALISM

- Michael Dugan, There Goes the Neighborhood, Australia's migrant experience, Sydney, 1984.
- A.Curthoys and A.Markus (EDs), Who are Our Enemies, Racism and the Working Class in Australia, Neutral Bay, NSW, 1978.

GENERAL AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

- Jim Cane, Australia: Lucky for some: A Cartoon History of Australia, South Yarra, Vic, 1986.
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ANARCHO-SYNDICALIST FEDERATION
WHERE WE STAND

1. Our aim is to create and defend a free and equal society.

2. We are a revolutionary labour movement that uses as its only means of struggle, direct action in all its forms - occupations, strikes, boycotts, sabotage, the general strike, etc. We are independent from all reformist and hierarchic unions and political parties, and we are actively creating an alternative to these and to existing society. We do not seek to gain political power, but rather to see it distributed equally amongst all.

3. We are a federation of autonomous anarcho-syndicalist groups practicing co-operation and mutual aid. We have no leaders. All members have an equal part in the making of decisions. Responsibilities within the group are carried out by recallable delegates on a voluntary basis. Decisions of the federation are subject to agreement by the member groups.

4. We are engaged in struggle, where we work and where we live, to develop self-managed production, distribution and servicing for the world community, to meet human needs rather than profit. We give solidarity to others involved in these struggles.

5. We are fighting to abolish all authoritarian institutions, such as the state (including its communist variety), capitalism, patriarchy, and all hierarchic and oppressive divisions between people.

6. We have no country and are organised on an international basis in opposition to oppression everywhere.

Was Australia settled or invaded?

Was Australia a vast and empty continent or were the Aborigines brutally massacred?

Were they a dying race or subject to introduced diseases, exploitation, neglect and cultural genocide?

Are arbitration and labour governments the greatest achievements of the labour movement or was real opposition to the bosses suppressed?

Is Australia a happy and multi-cultural society or one of the world's most racist states?

Is Australia the 'lucky country' or are our living conditions being rolled back?

Is there any unity in nationalism or are we being prepared for the corporate state?

Is there anything to celebrate in 88?

The Australian government's Bicentenary will be putting one version of the history.
This is another.

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